Title of the Research Proposal: Contemporary Santhali Literature: A Historiogaphy from “Below”

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Registration number: VB761 0f 2007-08

Registration Date: 01/09/2015

Keywords- Santhal, Santhali Literature, historiography

The aim of the research work will be to contextualise contemporary Santhali literature within the literary history of Santhali literature from the perspective of theme and form.

Santhali literature, as we know it today was not the same few decades ago. The contemporary Santhali writers have well adopted the foreign literary genres in their writings. The introduction of foreign literary genre into Santhali literature is not even a century old. The introduction of the foreign literary genre is a recent phenomenon. Though, we have a good number of Santhali writings dealing with different literary genres, we hardly find any written document or articles about the history of the entrance of the foreign literary genres into Santhali literature. There are hardly any books that would talk about how the early Santhali writers were influenced by the foreign literary genres; how they adopted these genres in their writings; what were the changes that were being brought about in the existing form of literary genes? The problem is, until and unless we study and analyse the influences of foreign literary genres and other literatures on Santhali literature, we will not be able to contextualise contemporary Santhali literature within the literary history of Santhali literature from the perspective of theme and form.

We do have information regarding which play is the first Santhali play or which novel or short story or poetry etc. is the first in the Santhali literature an when was it published. Unfortunately we do not know about any literary or social movement which led to the formation of first play or novel or short story etc. in Santhali literature. Being a phonocentric community, the Santhal had no writing system. It was introduced by the Christian missionaries during the last decade of the 19th century. In the early phase of Santhali literature, after the introduction of the writing system, documentation of *Hor kahniko*, *bentha katha*, *sereng*, traditional belief system were documented in Santhali using Roman script by the Christian missionaries. Books on Santali grammar, dictionaries were being composed. During the early decade of the 20th century, hymns in praise of Jesus Christ were being composed in Santhali. Simultaneously, translations from English to Santhali were also done. Roughly, till the first few decades of the 20th century, translations of religious hymns, translation of Hor kahniko and so on, were done. In 1936, the collection of seventeen Santhali poems first, *Onorhe Baha Dalwa (Branch of Flower)* was composed by Paul Jujher Soren (Tudu, 2013). Six years later, poems were published in *Marshall*, a Santhali literary journal. Thus, poetry was the first foreign literary genre which was adopted by the Santhali writers. The genre of drama was introduced in Santhali literature by

Pandit Raghunath Murmu's *Bidu Chandan* and *Kherwal Bir* in 1942 and 1946 respectively (Mahapatra, 1971). The genre of novel, in Santhali literature entered through translation. R.R Kisku first translated R. Carstairs 's historical novel *Harman's Village* (1935) into Santhali as *Harmava Atu* in 1946 (Hembrom, 2010).

There is also another problem with the historiography of Santhali literature. As may be case with most of the adivasi literature, the growth of Santhali literature is located not just in one state, but more than one state. In order to study the literary history of Santhali literature and more approximately, the literary history of contemporary Santhali literature we will have to take into account the influences of the literature that state on Santhali literature. In such case, the location of the writers would matter much. It can also be said, that the influence of foreign literary genre on Santhali writers/literature is heterogeneous. The question, thus, arises that in order to study the historiography of Santhali literature, what would be the most important criteria, that is, author-centric or theme and form centric or literary period centric? Can same criteria be applied to contemporary Santhali literature? Is there any significant departure from the early literary trend of Santhali literature or is it a carrying forward of the early literary trends? What are the significant changes that are being brought about by the contemporary Santhali writers in reshaping the genres and theme within specific literary mode? Thus, the aim of the P.hd thesis will be to do a historigaphical study of Santhali literature with special reference to contemporary Santhali literature.

In order to carry out the research work and find answers to the research question, I taken into consideration the contemporary Santal literature, from 2000 to the present. For my study, I have taken into consideration authors like Badal Hembram, Kherwal Soren, Jamadar Kisku, Nirmala Putul, Sowendra Sekhar Hansda, Regina Marandi, Ajun Chandra Hembrom, Gangadhar Hansda. The research work will be carried out doing a comparative study of the contemporary Santhali literature with the early Santhali literature. Interviews with Santhali scholars will be undertaken if required during the period of research work.

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